



THE CAPE BIRD CLUB

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Editor: R.K. Schmidt, Striegau,  
54, Lympleigh Rd., Plumstead.

The indications are that this year will be a good one for the vleis birds. In marked contrast to last year the Stilts, Coots and Ducks can be seen in numbers on all vleis in the Cape Flats. The rains did however, come rather late, and this probably accounts for the late records of migratory swallows. I saw a European Swallow on Strandfontein Road on 12 May and a Pearl-breasted Swallow on 20 May and eight on 28 July at the same place.

Dr. Uys reports: On 9 June Mr. Martin and I saw a European Swallow in the company of some Rock Martins at Macassar Beach. On 16 June I visited Tamatievlei and there saw 9 European Swallows. It was just beginning to get dark and they had settled with some Sand Martins on the upper strand of some fencing wire in a manner suggesting that they were preparing to roost there for the night. Dr. Uys has some interesting news; he writes: I visited Bredasdorp during the week starting on 14 May. On the farm Mierkraal, which is 8 miles out of the town on the road to Elim, I found a group of four Fork-tailed Drongoes. They might well have been an adult pair with two big young of the previous season. This is the farthest west that I have found Drongoes in the Western Cape. The nearest spot to this where I have found them previously has been Potberg. I also found the Tchagra Shrike at Mierkraal on several occasions during this week. On the wheatlands the Stanley Bustard also appeared to be more numerous at this time than previously. On the farm Patryskraal which is on the road to Potberg

I noticed a solitary European Stork on 16 May. On 26 May I took a drive out Vissershok way and observed a Grey-backed Finch Lark feeding on the ploughed lands close to the road on the Cape Town side of Vissershok. This year I have noticed that Finch Larks have been more abundant than usual in the Malmesbury district, but I have never seen them as close as this to Cape Town. Earlier in the year we spotted them frequently on the roadside fences between Hopefield and Darling and have also seen a few between Mamre and Darling.

On 17 June Dr. Uys and Mr. Martin visited Malanshoogte which is a few miles beyond Vissershok on the way to Adderley Road. There to their surprise they found quite a few Mountain Chats. This spot is about 15 miles from Cape Town and they wonder if this is not the nearest the Mountain Chat has been seen to Cape Town. The nearest Mr. Martin had seen them previously was at Piketberg.

Late in May Robbie Martin found a Sugarbird nest with three big young on the lower slopes of the Helderberg. This is an extremely rare occurrence as the usual number is two young. To Mr. Martin's knowledge, only one such nest with three young has been found previously; this was found a few years ago by himself and Mr. J.G. MacLeod at Vergelegen.

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Mr. J.G. Macleod reports about the Red-backed Shrike: On 9 February 1960 this bird was noticed for the first time in a garden in Drama Street, Somerset West. On 14 March, when I left on holiday, it was still there. A year later, on 19 January 1961, a bird (maybe the same one) was seen at the same place. In December of 1961 I saw a bird of this species being chased over the roof of our flats by a Fiscal Shrike. A female Black Cuckoo Shrike was seen in Drama Street on 19 April 1960. Our only previous record is for Pastorie Road, Somerset West, where a female was seen by Mr. MacLeod's sister on 7 July, 1937.

I wish to thank Dr. Winterbottom for the following explanations which should be a great help to all members; I hope they will bring in a big crop of Field Cards for him. He writes:

It has been suggested to me that members often find difficulty in deciding what habitat to put on Field Cards and that one of the reasons for the small number of cards sent in is this uncertainty about what to do. The following notes may be helpful.

1. Whenever possible, try to avoid making one card cover several habitats, even if it appears wasteful of cards not to do so. In this connection, be a "splitter", not a "lumper"! For example, if you are on the sea shore at Fish Hoek, keep one card for the birds on the sandy beach, another for the birds on the rocks and a third for the birds over the sea, even if most of them are the same in all three.

2. Birds obviously in transit across a habitat should either be omitted or marked as "flying over." For instance, Black Oystercatchers flying over the sea along the coast are not really inhabitants of the Offshore habitat; and Gulls or White-breasted Cormorants passing over indigenous bush on their way to some vlei are not really inhabitants of indigenous bush. This does not apply, of course, to birds foraging or feeding over a habitat, like Swallows, Crows and Black-shouldered Kites. Include them.

3. Owing to the difficulties of pigeon-holing the various habitats, the classification in the Check List is not always as clear as it would be in an ideal (?) world. Sometimes one habitat is found to be wholly included in another. One example of this is "Lagoons" and "Tidal Mud-flats" - tidal mud-flats occur chiefly in lagoons, so one has to decide how to classify the cards. Take Saldanha Bay, for instance. You are at Schrywershoek; how do you classify this? The solution I recommend is to use three cards; on one you mark all the species seen below high-tide mark; and this is classified as "Lagoon." On a second, you put down the species seen on the mud-flats and omit those of the open water and those seen only on the salt-marsh higher up. And the third card is for the salt-marsh and includes only those species seen in the vegetation-clad area (these, perhaps, are better omitted from the first card).

4. A rather similar case is that of "Reed-beds." These are almost always part of a river or vlei area. When the reeds are only a broken fringe, forming a small part of the total habitat, they can be included in a card dealing with the habitat as a whole. But sometimes they are very extensive, as, for example, the western side of Zoetendalsvlei or the south-east corner of Zeekoe Vlei. In such cases, use a separate card for them.

5. "Indigenous bush" is another one that causes head-aches. First to deal with "Dense Stands of Proteas." This refers to areas where the dominant vegetation is Proteaceae, like that shown in Photo. 40 in "Canaries, Seed-eaters and Buntings." If the Proteas are scattered through the other bush, then the habitat counts as "Indigenous Bush on Mountains" or "on the Flats," according to locality. It is NOT necessary for the observer to fill in the "Acocks" classification.

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6. The classification of rivers in the Check List is not very satisfactory and Mr. Skead and I are amending it in No. 3 of the "South African Avifauna Series", to appear shortly. The new classification will be:

Rivers with muddy beds (and non-tidal mud-flats)  
Wide rivers (e.g., Breede R. at Swellendam)  
Tree-enclosed streams  
Streams with rocky beds  
Streams with sandy beds

Note that we have substituted "Tree-enclosed" for "Tree-lined." This means that you will need two cards for, e.g., the Breede River at Swellendam, one for the river itself ("Wide River") and another for the trees along its banks ("Riverside Bush"), instead of blanketing everything under "Tree-lined River;" and the same would apply to the stream at "Goedontmoetings", where the stream itself would be classified as "Stream with sandy bed" and the birds of the fringing trees put on a separate card under "Wattles."

7. Sometimes two or more habitats are inextricably mixed. This is often the case with Wattles and Indigenous Bush on Flats. If the habitat does not clearly fall into one category, with just a small admixture of the other, then it must be classified as "Mixed Wattles and Indigenous Bush on Flats" and left at that. In point of fact, we could usefully have a lot of cards for such a mixture, to throw light on the changes of the fauna as the encroaching wattles increase their hold.

I hope these rather tedious explanations have cleared up some doubts. If you have others, let me know and I will do my best to resolve them.

Mr. Martin submitted his 1961 report of Cape Bird Club nest record cards:

The year 1961 has been a very good one as far as nest record cards are concerned. In 1959, 854 cards were returned, in 1960 there were 999 and now we have 1348 covering more than 2172 nests. 69 members were responsible for these cards which cover 132 species.

Members responsible for more than 100 cards are Mr. Jack MacLeod (214), Robert Martin (175), Mr. R.K. Schmidt (141), Mr. E. Middlemiss (138), Mrs. E. Martin (120) and J. Martin (221).

The following are some of the more interesting discoveries:

- a) The nest with 3 young of the White Stork found near Bredasdorp by Miss Joan Robinson, Mrs. Elsie Martin and Robert Martin.
- b) Our first card for the nest of the Fork-tailed Drongo found at Potberg by Dr. Uys and J. Martin.
- c) Nests with eggs of the Greater Flamingo found again this year at Reinerskraal, but all of which came to grief due to suspected otters.
- d) The surprising number of Cape Wagtail cards (66) probably due to the response to Dr. Winterbottom's call for more information on this species.
- e) Purple Heron nest with eggs found on a small island on Zeekoevlei by Paul Broekhuysen. Young did not hatch.
- f) Button Quail nest with 4 eggs found at Potberg by Dr. Uys and J. Martin.
- g) Whiskered Terns again nesting at Klawervlei and a second colony found in the Bredasdorp district by Dr. Uys and J. Martin.
- h) Two nests of Victorin's Warbler found on one day by Mr. Jack MacLeod and Mrs. Knipe.

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i) Colonies of Wattled Starlings nesting on the farm Slangkop near Darling by Mr. R.K. Schmidt and a second colony nearby by Mr. Jack MacLeod and J. Martin, as well as 3 other colonies near Bredasdorp by Dr. Uys and J. Martin and a fourth nesting-site in this area by Mr. Jack MacLeod.

The year 1961 has been our best year for nests so far. Many thanks to all who have helped to make it so.

The following members returned more than 20 cards each:

Dr. Broekhuysen (28), Mr. A.R. Brown (76), Mr. R.W. Douglas (81), Mrs. S.L. Knipe (53), Mr. Lestrangle (33), Miss C.A. MacLeod (56), Mr. H.K. Morgan (23), Mr. A. Morris (30), Mr. Nico Myburgh (47), Miss C. Robinson (22), Miss J. Robinson (26), Mr. G.D. Underhill (32), Dr. C.J. Uys (64), Dr. J.M. Winterbottom (47).

Dr. Broekhuysen reports about ringing:

During the period July 1961 to end of March 1962, a total of 2112 birds were ringed by members of the Cape Bird Club. Five of the members ringed more than 20 birds each and they are:

A.R. Brown	1624	R.K. Schmidt	32
G. Potgieter	312	G.J. Broekhuysen	29
J. MacLeod	75		

Highlights in the list of birds ringed are the large number of European Swallows, Curlew Sandpipers and Little Stints. The major share for these goes in the first place to Brown and in the second place to Potgieter. It is hoped that both will continue their good work. Especially Brown's effort is remarkable as he ringed 77% of all birds ringed during the period concerned. The ringing of the European Spotted Flycatcher and the three nestling European Storks in the Bredasdorp district are also worth special notice.

Dr. Broekhuysen also reports about ROAD CASUALTY COUNTS

This project has now come to an end as it has been carried out over a period of exactly two years. The results will be analysed and written up and in due course be published in The Ostrich. During these two years more than 500 casualties have been recorded, and it should be realised that these must represent only a fraction of what was there, as many birds after having been hit by a car are thrown clear of the road into the vegetation on the sides.

During the period 1 April 1961 to the end of March 1962 the following records were collected by members. The number does not indicate the actual number of casualties reported, but the number of forms filled in and returned by the observer. Even if no casualty was reported but a form was filled in, giving the mileage covered, etc., this counted as an observation for that person.

G.J. Broekhuysen	80
J.M. Winterbottom	50
M.K. Rowan	22
R. Schmidt	10
E. Robinson	4
J. Martin	2
C. Robinson	1
A. Degenhart	1
S.W. Clarke	1
G. Underhill	1

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Most of the records were collected by Winterbottom and Broekhuysen but the following contributed also:

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H.K. Morgan	40	A. Morris	11
J. Martin	38	R. Schmidt	8
Ferguson	17	J. Robinson & E. Martin	7
A.R. Brown	13	J. MacLeod	3
		I. Taylor	2

S. Clarke, C. Robinson, E. Robinson, G.D. Underhill 1 each.

The Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, in co-operation with the Cape Department of Nature Conservation, proposes to run a Field Course in Ornithology at the De Hoop Wildlife Farm, Bredasdorp District, from 15th to 19th October, 1962, both dates inclusive.

The course will include practical instruction in the study of bird behaviour, territory, nest records and census work (both of land and of water birds); and the instructors will include Dr. Winterbottom, Mrs. M.K. Rowan and Mr. C.J. Skead of the staff of the Percy FitzPatrick Institute.

Accommodation of the dormitory type will be available, but students must bring their own beds, bedding, crockery and cutlery. Food will be provided. The fee for the course (including food) is R15.00.

There are no restrictions on applicants but the course is considered particularly suitable for those who attended the 1962 Summer School in Ornithology, undergraduate students of Zoology, Honorary Nature Conservation Officers, Associate Workers of the African Wildfowl Enquiry and members of the South African Ornithological Society, who will receive priority of consideration should there be more applicants than places.

If you wish for further particulars, apply to:

The Director,  
Percy FitzPatrick Institute of  
African Ornithology,  
University of Cape Town,  
RONDEBOSCH, C.P.